

At the mouth of Raft River Ogden encountered a large camp of Snake Indians who possessed an American flag and were liberally equipped with knives and trinkets obtained from a band of Ashley trappers with whom they had spent the winter near the site of the present Ogden, Utah. Hearing that these Americans were on Bear River, Ogden decided to postpone hunting on Raft River and instead to hasten up the Snake to trap before the beaver in that vicinity were exhausted by these rivals. He followed up the south bank to the Portneuf River. That stream was crossed, and he continued a few miles in the direction of the site of the later Fort Hall. Here buffalo were encountered, so Ogden halted and began gathering meat for the homeward journal. He believed the time would have been better spent hunting beaver, but McLoughlin had ordered him to return to Fort Vancouver by August 10 so that his furs could be shipped to England in the fall vessel.²²¹ Further, hostile Indians were swarming in the area, and Ogden felt that if his men escaped with their lives and horses they would be "very lucky."

While the party was busily engaged in gathering and drying buffalo meat, a group of twenty-eight Americans and deserters from Ogden's expedition of the previous year came into camp on April 9. The newcomers were astonished to see the British, since they had believed Gardner's threats had bluffed the Hudson's Bay men into avoiding the Snake Country. In this, said Ogden, "they find themselves mistaken."²²² The next day Ogden traded 93

beaver and 2 seasoned otter skins from the "strangers" and even more to his satisfaction received 81 large beaver pelts and 1 small one from the deserters in payment of their debts to the Company. Three other deserters made at least partial restitution through notes or "all the Skins they had."

Ogden was pleased to learn that his deserters were tired of their "New Masters," and he thought it likely that they would return to the Company's fold. They had attended General Ashley's 1825 rendezvous on Henry's Fork of Green River. Although the Americans paid \$3.00 a pound for beaver skins, they also charged \$2.50 for a knife and \$6.00 for a yard of blue cloth.²²³ At those prices the freemen were not too much better off than they had been at Flathead Post, where they had families and friends and felt comfortable. One of Ogden's men requested permission to join his father who was with the Americans. Since Ogden considered him a "worthless useless scamp," his wish was granted.²²⁴ But two men from the American camp came over to the British party, and not a single member of Ogden's brigade deserted. Ogden derived much satisfaction from the results of this encounter, and he was particularly pleased with the conduct of his men.

On April 11 Ogden started on his return journey, heading down the Snake, though with only half the provisions he would require. A pause was made to trap Raft River as Ogden had planned. Once more severe weather overtook the party. Ogden recorded his admiration for the men who "naked as the greater part are and

destitute of Shoes," continued to set their traps despite being nearly frozen. Two-thirds of the men were without even a single blanket or any shelter and had been so for six months. To make matters worse, on May 7 several of the party became violently ill from eating tainted beaver meat, and the attacks continued for four days, with nearly half the party falling victim. All Ogden could do was administer a frontier remedy -- pepper and gunpowder mixed with water.²²⁵

It was May 10 before the company was again in motion. The route was westward from the upper waters of Raft River to Goose Creek, which was examined to its source but proved to be poor in beaver. The brigade continued northwestward, roughly paralleling the south bank of the Snake but finding poor hunting along the streams they crossed. When the Bruneau River was reached a long detour was made to the south to trap the upper waters of that stream and the Owyhee River. Beaver and food were scarce, the weather severe, and the rocky country hard on the men and horses. Nothing could be learned of the six men who were supposed to rejoin the party on the Owyhee. Discouraged, Ogden once more turned northwestward to the south bank of Snake River, which was followed to the mouth of Burnt River.

The latter stream was ascended to its "Forks." There, on June 29, 1826, Ogden "seperated" from McDonald, Dears, and McKay, who were sent with some of the men to carry the accumulated furs to Fort Nez Percés, where they were to leave their horses and then

continue by boat to Fort Vancouver with the returns. This detached party carried out its mission with remarkable speed. It reached the Columbia depot on July 12, much to the surprise of Chief Factor McLoughlin.²²⁶

Ogden was anxious to see for himself the country traversed by McDonald the previous fall, and he had agreed to meet his trappers under Gervais in that region on July 15. Therefore he took the main party back roughly over his outward track across the watersheds of the John Day and Deschutes Rivers. From the latter stream he turned west and crossed the Cascade Range through deep snow to the waters of the Willamette. He believed the route pioneered by McDonald could be made into a fine road for the Company's brigades going to the Klamath country if used after the snow had melted, but he considered the distance too great and the terrain too difficult to be of use to the Snake Country expeditions.

When he reached the Willamette on July 16, perhaps near the present Champoeg State Park, Ogden met a freeman from whom he borrowed two canoes. These he exchanged at Willamette Falls for a single large canoe, in which he reached Fort Vancouver on the evening of July 17, 1826.²²⁷ "Thus," he wrote in his journal, "ends my second Trip and I am I trust thankfull for the many dangers I have escaped and returned with all my party in safty and had we not been obliged from the severity of the winter to Kill our horses for food, the success of our expedition would

have yielded handsome profits, as it is, fortunately no loss will be sustained."²²⁸

Although Ogden was disappointed with the results of his second journey to the Snake Country, they were, all things considered, quite satisfactory. No men had been killed by Indians and none had deserted, a fact Ogden attributed to the circumstance that two-thirds of his party was composed of engaged employees on wages, "which," he said, "gave me a decided advantage over the remainder on all occasions."²²⁹

Financially, the expedition produced an "apparent" profit of about £2533 -- the true gain would only be determined several years later after the Company had sold the furs in London and completed the accounting. In 1829 Governor Simpson estimated the profit at £3000. The skins brought in by water from Walla Walla and by Ogden himself amounted to 3577 beaver and 123 otter, plus some miscellaneous furs.²³⁰ What was more, in contrast to previous Snake expeditions, the pelts were in excellent condition. McLoughlin stated in August, 1826, that "the Snake furs this year are the finest furs in the Columbia."²³¹ Such results, together with what he had learned when reviewing the Snake accounts, had by that date convinced the "Big Doctor" that the Snake expeditions provided, "in proportion to the capital required," "the "Best trade we have on this side of the mountains."²³²

Ogden had been almost continuously in the field for more than a year and a half, and he deserved the two month's rest he took at Fort Vancouver. But no one spent much time in idleness under McLoughlin's command, and Ogden was no exception. Among other things, he kept busy with reports, correspondence, and preparations for his next expedition. And he presented a number of suggestions for improving the future operations of the Snake parties.

First, he proposed that two parties should be sent to that region, a strong one of at least fifty men to hunt in the dangerous section along the Snake River "and the Country adjacent to it" where Indian war parties were frequent, and another to go south from Fort Vancouver to the Klamath area and on beyond to territory McDonald did not reach. He recommended that at least two-thirds of the party to the Snake River should consist of regular engaged "servants" (employees), and he proposed that the expedition should remain out for from eighteen months to two years.²³³ He was convinced that too much time was spent traveling "to and from headquarters," thereby losing the best hunting season and reducing returns, and he pointed out the superiority of the American system of using the rendezvous to keep the trappers continuously at the hunting grounds. The bitter experience of the past winter had shown him that the Snake parties could not rely solely on game while going to and coming from the buffalo country, and he urged that ample provisions be carried along from the start.²³⁴

Ogden did not get everything he asked for. Only one "Snake Expedition" was to be sent out in the fall of 1826. The Hudson's Bay Company never did adopt the rendezvous system as a regular practice. It preferred to work from fixed posts. Also, for his third expedition Ogden was able to obtain only enough engagés to make up a little more than half his party instead of the two-thirds he considered necessary.²³⁵

But, again acting on his own responsibility, McLoughlin freed Ogden from the necessity of returning by a fixed date. Ogden was "to guide himself in his proceedings by the circumstances he finds himself placed in and only to return in 1827 when it suits his views."²³⁶ Although such flexibility was not always permitted in the future, a precedent for longer expeditions was established. Also, Ogden was given a supply of provisions to take with him at the start of his next journey, a procedure continued in future years.²³⁷

This expedition was also the first to benefit from the improved financial terms offered by McLoughlin to the freemen. The Columbia manager told Governor Simpson that Ogden's men had set out "in high spirits" and that once in the field they "were exerting themselves well."²³⁸

The objectives of Ogden's third Snake Expedition were described by McLoughlin in his report to the Governor and Committee on September 1, 1826: "Mr. Ogden starts from this [Fort Vancouver] with one Clerk and thirty-five men and proceeds direct to the River discovered by Silvaille [Silvie's River] (supposed to be a Branch of the River said to Fall in the Ocean south of the Umpqua)

thence towards Lac Sale [Great Salt Lake] make a Circuit West and comes Out about the Clamet tribe."²³⁹

McLoughlin, as did a great many other people at the time, accepted a then-prevalent theory that a large river, as yet undiscovered in its entirety, flowed from a source somewhere near Great Salt Lake westward to the Pacific.²⁴⁰ As early as October, 1825, he had heard Indian reports of a large river, rich in beaver, falling into the sea south of the Umpqua, and he believed it to be the fabled stream of the fanciful map makers. He planned to have a hunting or trading party on it in 1826, a determination which at least partly accounts for the decision to send Ogden from Silvies River westward to Great Salt Lake.²⁴¹ By being instructed to go in that direction and also to the Klamath, Ogden's single party was being assigned the work of both the expeditions he had recommended. Noteworthy was the fact that he received no written instructions and that McLoughlin authorized him to be "ruided by circumstances" in determining his eventual route.²⁴²

Preparations for the third expedition started well in advance of the date of departure. Some members of the party were dispatched to Walla Walla for the horses required. They brought about 100 animals down to The Dalles, but that number was not sufficient. Probably in anticipation of this deficit, Ogden sent former employee and now freeman Jean Baptiste Gervais and six men from Fort Vancouver to bring additional horse and mules from the Willamette Valley across the Cascades, probably by Santiam Pass, to a rendezvous point on

Crooked River. On September 1, 1826, Clerk Thomas McKay left the depot with another detachment of the men to meet the party with the Walla Walla horses, and on September 11 Ogden and twelve men parted from McLoughlin and started up the Columbia by boat for The Dalles.²⁴³

At that rendezvous point the expedition was quickly organized, and on September 18 the company headed south up Eight Mile Creek. According to Ogden the party then numbered "in all" thirty-five.²⁴⁴ He did not mention women and children, although there were a number along. Ogden was assisted by only one clerk, Thomas McKay, McLoughlin's stepson and a superb hunter. McDonald was no longer available. He was headed East to retirement.²⁴⁵ Ogden had not wanted any additional "gentlemen," since they had to be fed by the Company, which he considered "a very great burden." In fact, including McKay there were only three game hunters in the entire party, a circumstance which made it certain that most of the freemen and engagés would have to subsist much of the time on the flesh of the beaver they took or, in extremity, on their horses.²⁴⁶

Reaching the Deschutes River, Ogden crossed it at the present Sherars Bridge and continued southeastwardly to the Crooked River. Here Gervais and the additional men from the Willamette joined him, but they brought little joy since the horses they convoyed were "miserably poor." Ogden now followed his track of the previous December until October 6, when the party turned southeast, following a small branch of Crooked River and then crossing the divide to the

Silvies River drainage. Beaver were found in fair numbers on this stream, but it was not the beaver heaven reported by Antoine Sylvaillie who had discovered it while detached from Ogden's second expedition earlier in the year.²⁴⁷

While on Silvies River two of Ogden's French-Canadian freemen became embroiled in a quarrel with Indians over some stolen horses, and both men were severely wounded by arrows. The trappers recovered, but they had to carry the arrowheads in their bodies until they returned to a Company post, for Ogden did not consider himself adequate to the task of removing them.²⁴⁸

Ogden descended Silvies River almost as far as its discharge into Malheur Lake and then veered southwest to strike the shore of the present Harney Lake which lies immediately to the west of Malheur Lake. He found the western body of water to be brackish and called it Salt Lake. He was disappointed to learn that these lakes had no outlet either to Snake River or to the sea. He did note, however, that waterfowl were abundant, as indeed they are to this day.

For a number of days the beaver hunting had been extremely unproductive along the lower course of Silvies River and around the lakes. And on November 2 snow began to fall. The men were hungry, some even starving. The birds on the lakes proved very shy, so that few were taken despite a liberal expenditure of ammunition. To make matters worse, no native guide could be found, and Ogden had to admit that the men were "all ignorant of the Country."²⁴⁹

By November 4 Ogden had to confess that prospects were dismal. A "general discontent" prevailed in the camp, and the freemen were plotting to go off on their own. Ogden feared that if game were not found soon the expedition's horses, so vital for success, would "fall for the Kettle."²⁵⁰

Giving up all idea of going across more barren and unknown country toward Great Salt Lake, Ogden decided to head for the Klamath region -- the area about the Klamath Lakes -- by the most direct route he could discover and then to continue on beyond it. Since McDonald had reported finding beaver in that direction and since Ogden agreed to share his provisions with them, the rebellious freemen "appeared contented" and remained with the expedition.

From Harney Lake Ogden now went westward over a dry country where the horses suffered much for lack of water. To make matters worse, Tom McKay had lost the only compass in the party, so the men had only the sun to guide them. On November 14 Ogden noted that during the preceding ten days the men had eaten only six meals "and those slight ones."²⁵¹ Fortunately, two lakes -- East Lake and Paulina Lake -- were struck the next day, and the horses at last quenched their thirst. On November 17 the party reached the Little Deschutes River near the present Lapine, Oregon. McKay and a number of the men had visited this stream with McDonald, so Ogden was no longer troubled by doubts as to where he was.

The company now turned south up the Little Deschutes River. Traps were set daily, but the results were miserable, since

McDonald's party had cleared the area of beaver during 1825. Leaving the Deschutes drainage by way of the present Chemult Pass, Ogden crossed to waters running southward. He speculated that they eventually joined some "large River which must go to the ocean."²⁵² He had hopes of finding beaver on this stream, but even if he did not he would feel rewarded if deer and elk could be encountered or even Indians from whom salmon could be obtained. Such was the gravity of the situation in which the expedition found itself. Already the men had started killing the horses for food.

Having passed well to the east of Crater Lake, the party reached the Williamson River on November 29. Here, two days later, two "Express Men" whom Ogden had earlier sent to Fort Vancouver overtook the brigade. For fourteen days they had eaten practically no food and for the last nine days had not once drunk water. According to Ogden they could no longer walk or even crawl. The party continued down Williamson River, passing several Indian villages where they very thankfully were able to trade for roots, dogs, and fish. On December 5 they passed the farthest point reached by McDonald. "We are now consequently strangers to the Country in advance," Ogden noted. But he observed that in trading their furs, the natives were already "well acquainted with Ft. Vancouver prices," a fact he attributed to contacts with Indians in the Umpqua or Willamette regions.²⁵³

The march south was continued, the route lying along the east shore of Upper Klamath Lake. Snow and rain plagued the party, and Ogden was worried, remembering the hard times of the previous journey.

"The winter season is certainly not the most propitious for discovering a strange Country," he confided in his journal.²⁵⁴

At the lower end of the lake he struck the outlet, the present Link River which soon becomes the Klamath, but was persuaded by his native guides not to follow it because of the swamps and lakes in that direction. The next two weeks were spent in the vicinity of Lower Klamath Lake and Tule Lake. Beaver were practically nonexistent, and the sagebrush-covered terrain reminded Ogden of the Snake Country. Far to the west he could see a high snow-capped peak, the present Mount Shasta, near which he was told by his guides lived the "Castise" Indians.²⁵⁵

On December 31, 1826 -- which he thought was New Year's Day -- the men followed an old Canadian fur-trade custom by paying their respects to their bourgeois. "I," recorded Ogden, "gave them a dram and 1 foot of Tobacco and my best wishes for their success."²⁵⁶ The party was then somewhere in the "chain of cut Rocks" -- the present Lava Beds National Monument -- south of Tule Lake. Their situation was discouraging. The day before Ogden had given out the last of his provisions. The hunters were having little success, and scouts confirmed Indian reports that to the south lay only high mountains and dry plains with no sign of water. The freemen were restless again, and two said they would leave if the march south continued.

Although he did not specifically say so in his journal, Ogden seems to have been marching south in hope of finding the legendary Buena Ventura River thought to link Great Salt Lake with the Pacific

Ocean. Regretfully, being "destitute of recourses," Ogden decided on that last day of 1826 to "return and seek food where we can find it."²⁵⁷ His goal was now "the lower part of the Clammitt River."²⁵⁸ But he intended to return in the spring and make another attempt to explore southward.

The Klamath was reached, evidently near the present **Klamath, Falls, Oregon**, on January 13, 1827. No beaver were found here, and Ogden was thoroughly discouraged. Both Silvies River and the Klamath country had not lived up to reports, and he believed his expedition would be a failure. He tried to console himself with the thought that at least the poverty of these regions was now known and that no more effort would be wasted on them. While waiting to obtain a guide to lead them in the direction of the Willamette the men subsisted largely on dogs traded from the natives.

At last an Indian guide was found, and the party moved down the north bank of the Klamath. On January 23 they reached a point where the river ahead presented "one continued rapid fall & Cascade" as far as could be seen.²⁵⁹ The guide told them that salmon did not ascend beyond that place, a fact which Ogden took as evidence that the Klamath fell into the sea and was not the branch of a larger stream such as the Buenaventura.

From the Klamath Ogden headed northwest across the Siskiyou Mountains. Trapping proved more productive on the Klamath tributaries, and the Indians kept promising richer fields over the range.

The summit was crossed on February 8, and the party descended the Little Applegate River and then the main Applegate.* Spirits rose among the hunters as beaver and game were found in good numbers, although attacks by Indians on the expedition's horses raised Ogden's apprehensions that if the depredations were not checked "our Scalps will soon share the fate of our Horses."²⁶⁰

While the company was still on the main Applegate River hunting and trapping began to fail. Once more Ogden feared his horses would not "escape the Kettle."²⁶¹ The natives informed him that the lower part of the Applegate was barren of beaver, being "rocky and stony." But they told of a large river well stocked with beaver which lay several days' march away. While not entirely convinced that this information was true, Ogden said that if there was such a stream "we must endeavour to find it."²⁶²

After crossing the Applegate and enlisting a new guide, Ogden started northwesterly on March 13 for the "new River." Two days later the company reached the present Allen Creek and then continued on to descend to the Rogue River near today's Grants Pass on March 22. This stream was the one claimed by the Indians to be "full of Beaver," but much to the disappointment of all the trappers few were taken. To make matters worse, Ogden learned from the natives that six trappers from the Willamette had visited "this quarter" earlier and "had taken all the Beaver." These men undoubtedly were an advance party from Alexander Roderick McLeod's Umpqua expedition of 1826-1827 which shall be noted later. Ogden also heard from the

*Since this essay was written the publication of Jeff LaLande's First Over the Siskiyou has thrown new light on Ogden's route north of the Siskiyou. Interested persons are advised to study this fine work. JAH 7/ 11/88

Indians that the Umpqua was a hard six days' journey ahead.²⁶³

In this situation Ogden decided to send Jean Baptiste Gervais and four men to trap the smaller streams of the Rogue vicinity and then to hunt their way northward by the Umpqua and Willamette "so as to open a communication between this quarter and Fort Vancouver,"²⁶⁴ This detached party reached the Columbia depot safely and brought with them a "Package" of Ogden's returns.²⁶⁵

After parting from Gervais, Ogden and his remaining men went north parallel to the Rogue for a short distance but halted when hunters who had been out in advance returned to camp with news that they had seen "a large track made by Trappers."²⁶⁶ This trail also must have been beaten by a party of McLeod's expedition.

Ogden could see no point in continuing farther into a region already trapped, and he decided to return to the Klamath River and rejoin McKay, who with a band of trappers had been left to test several tributaries of that stream. He would then, he wrote to McLoughlin, "be Guided in his future proceedings by the circumstances he found himself placed in."²⁶⁷ His true intention, however, was to renew his search for the elusive Buenaventura River.²⁶⁸ And he still had another old proposal in mind. He told McLoughlin that if he found a region abounding in beaver, the main party would stay there to hunt while he or McKay brought the furs then assembled to Fort Vancouver and then returned with supplies.²⁶⁹ He could not let go of his "rendezvous" idea.

Scouts were sent out in an attempt to find a more direct route to the Klamath River than the one they had followed to the Rogue, but all reported meeting "one continued Mountain of Rocks" on ascending nearby streams. Thus on April 2, 1827, the expedition started back on its former track and with little deviation from it reached the Klamath on April 18. McKay rejoined the main party a few days later after a most successful hunt. On April 30 the expedition crossed the Klamath and headed back to the lava beds. When Ogden reached the campsite "from whence I returned last winter" his Indian guides told him the "River we are going to is far distant" -- a clear indication that the Buenaventura was on his mind.²⁷⁰

Continuing in a southeasterly direction the party came upon Turner Creek, a branch of the Pit River. On both the tributary and the main stream, which was reached on May 9, the trappers found the banks lined with pits -- some of them thirty feet deep -- dug by the Indians to catch wolves and deer. Three men and their horses fell into these holes, but only one horse was killed. "To warn others who may chance to travel in this quarter," Ogden named the stream Pit River.²⁷¹

Ogden now turned up this stream, passing the hot sulphur springs near the present Canby. He had intended to go downstream but was dissuaded by reports that there were few beaver in that direction. Had he done so he would have found that he was on the only Buenaventura River there ever was -- the Sacramento River and its main branch, the Pit. Until he was quite close to Goose Lake

Ogden had been hoping that he could follow his instructions and take a "Southern Course," but snow on the mountains in that direction and reports that there were no beaver there made him determine to go eastward "with the hopes of falling on the waters of the Snake Country."²⁷² He then had only about half the pelts he considered necessary to make his "hunt," and well aware that profits counted for more than geographical knowledge with his peers he was ready to give precedence to business over exploration. But he consoled himself with the thought that even though he had incurred considerable expense to determine that the Klamath country contained few beaver, at least future expeditions should not have to relearn the lesson.²⁷³

Goose Lake was reached on May 15, and the party advanced northward along its eastern shore. Near the upper end of the lake the hunters killed five "White Herrons." Ogden was struck by the "butifull Plumage" and took the skin of one to carry back to Fort Vancouver. This act was in accordance with one of the customs, if not duties, of the Company's trapping brigades -- the picking up of biological, geological, and ethnological oddities for personal, economic, or scientific purposes. Some of these specimens eventually found their way to London.²⁷⁴ It is possible that Ogden's interest in natural science had been increased by his conversations with British botanist David Douglas at Fort Vancouver during the previous summer.²⁷⁵

From Goose Lake the party traveled northeasterly, most of the time over barren, rocky, sagebrush-covered ground. "This looks like

Snake Lands," Ogden noted in his journal.²⁷⁶ On the fourth day out from the lake the Indian guide refused to go farther and left. Ogden was now on his own, knowing only of the country ahead that the Snake River lay somewhere in the direction he was taking. Few animals were seen, food became low, and as the men progressed farther into a region of alkali or muddy lakes and streams, potable water grew scarce. The men began to kill their horses for food, and two mares that died from poisonous water or plants were sold to fill the cooking pots.

At last, on June 4, a scout returned to camp with the welcome news that he had seen some "high hills" which he recognized from having observed them on the outward journey in the fall. Two days later, "to the great satisfaction of all the Party," the expedition reached one of its former camp sites near Harney Lake. Ogden now knew where he was, but he still had the prospect before him of having to traverse much barren country in search of beaver. "To return to Fort Vancouver with our present returns," he confided in his journal, "will be to me most galling."²⁷⁷

Wide expanses of shallow and stinking water on the approach to Harney Lake ended any hope Ogden may still have had of proceeding southward, presumably toward Great Salt Lake. He now followed his old track north of Harney Lake and Valheur Lake and up the valley of Silvies River. On June 11 the company reached the vicinity of today's Burns, Oregon. Ogden had been ill for three days, and now was unable to leave his bed. By the twenty-second, though still

"Skin and Bone." he felt well enough to plan to resume the march the next day. The enforced halt had not been without its benefits. In addition to giving the men and animals a rest, it had permitted the trappers to add more than seventy-five beaver pelts to the returns.

Silvies River was crossed on June 26, and the party continued eastward to the upper waters of the Malheur River. The men were now back in beaver country, and the catches, while "not over abundant," were a decided improvement over those of the recent past. The leader still anticipated "miserable returns" for the entire trip, however, since the trappers had not averaged more than one hundred beaver each. When the main Malheur River was reached, Ogden detached a party of seven trappers to search out the headwaters of the Owyhee River and to hunt there. They were to rejoin the main party on Snake River in twenty days.

Ogden followed down the Malheur, the men suffering much from hot weather. When the North Fork was reached near the present Juntura, trappers who had gone ahead warned against continuing down the main stream because the route was "one continued Rock & Stone," so the company turned up the North Fork to the vicinity of the present Beulah and then crossed eastward to Bully Creek. Descending the latter stream to its junction with the Malheur, Ogden marched eastward to the Snake, which was reached on July 16, 1827, a short distance below the mouth of the Malheur.

Here the main party was reunited with all but three of the trappers who had gone to the Owyhee River. The three missing men were believed to be on the lower Owyhee, and Ogden sent a group to find them. Fortunately for them they turned up, for otherwise Ogden was quite prepared to "leave them to their fate." It was their duty, he believed, "to be here at the appointed time."²⁷⁸ Such was the often harsh rule of the trail.

Ogden was anxious to get back to Fort Nez Percés to begin preparations for taking the field again in the fall. And undoubtedly he was mindful of the desirability of getting his returns to Fort Vancouver in time to catch the vessel for England. Thus, on July 18, he and four men started for Walla Walla, leaving the main party to follow under the command of Tom McKay.²⁷⁹

Ogden reached the departmental depot with his furs on August 5, 1827, and the returns were rushed down to the mouth of the Columbia and loaded aboard the Company's vessel, William & Ann, then on the point of leaving the river homeward bound.²⁸⁰ Information on the exact number of pelts produced by Ogden's third Snake Expedition seems not to be available, but evidently the yield was below expectations. The eventual profits were said by Governor Simpson to have been about £2000.²⁸¹

Chief Factor McLoughlin retained his confidence in Ogden but seems to have felt it necessary to defend him when reporting on the journey to the London directors. "Often did the trappers propose to Return Back," he wrote, "and had it not been for his [Ogden's]

influence and Exertions the Expedition would have failed: freemen in the plains with their families starving about them are not Easily led and I have no hesitation in saying that to Conduct a trapping party is the most difficult, harassing, and dangerous charge in the whole Business."²⁸²

But if the results had not been spectacular financially they were important in other respects. Ogden had discovered ~~and named~~ Mount Shasta. He had traced the upper courses of the Klamath and Pit Rivers and had christened the latter. He had pioneered a route used by later brigades in traveling between Fort Nez Percés and the Sacramento Valley by way of Pit River and Malheur Lake. And he had revealed that large areas between Silvies River and the Pit and Klamath Rivers had been quite effectively denuded of beaver by fires, by the natives, or, possibly, by disease.²⁸³

Ogden wasted little time enjoying the comforts of Fort Vancouver. By August 11, 1827, McLoughlin was able to write: "Mr. Ogden's party is Ready Equiped to Start."²⁸⁴ This may have been the case at the depot, but upstream there was much more to be done. On that same day the "Big Doctor" sent orders to the upriver posts to provide such additions to the outfit as might be required. J. W. Dease, in charge of the Colville District, was told, for example, to give Ogden ten saddles, six leather lodges, and ten parflèches (hide covers to protect packs; ~~hide bags~~) ~~plus~~ such items as had already been requested. William Kittson was directed "to

proceed to the Nez Perces Camp to assist Mr. Ogden to purchase Horses."²⁸⁵

Ogden got off from Fort Vancouver for his fourth Snake expedition on August 24, 1827.²⁸⁶ Accompanied by Clerk Thomas McKay and twenty-eight "trappers," his immediate objective was Fort Nez Percés. Some of the men had their families with them, but the number of women and children is not mentioned in available records.²⁸⁷ Although his means of transport seems nowhere to be mentioned, he probably went by boat in view of his heavy load of provisions and goods and in view of the fact that he obtained a good part or even all of his horses at Walla Walla. "My expectations as far as regards success is far from being sanguine," he wrote a few days later, "still the attempt is worthy of a trial."²⁸⁸

When Ogden set out from the Columbia depot he knew that his idea of a "rendezvous" system had been rejected. During July, 1826, Governor Simpson had written to McLoughlin as follows:

It is intended that a strong Trapping Expedition be kept up to hunt in the country to the southward of the Columbia, as while we have access thereto it is our interest to reap all the advantage we can for ourselves, and leave it in as bad a state as possible for our successors; this party may be called the Snake, Umpqua or any other Expedition you please, but our wish is that it should scour the country wherever Beaver can be found (but on no consideration cross the [Rocky] Mountains) take its returns to Fort Vancouver annually in sufficient time to be sent home by the Ship of the season and return to its hunting grounds immediately.²⁸⁹

These instructions seemingly left little room for an expedition which would stay in the field for two or more years. As early as 1825 Simpson had made up his mind that the "people of the

Expedition" should bring the returns to the depot and should be reequipped there "instead of having to employ extra men for that service."²⁹⁰ He had not changed his mind in the interim.

Ogden's specific instructions from McLoughlin were simple: he was "to proceed up the main Snake River to Hunt where Mr. Ross was in 1824."²⁹¹ McLoughlin had been informed by Governor Simpson that a trapping party was to be organized at Red River during the fall of 1826 and sent over the mountains under Chief Trader Simon McGillivray and Cuthbert Grant to hunt "in the country to the southward of the Columbia."²⁹² The "Big Doctor" told Ogden that if he met McGillivray he was "to act according to the circumstances he finds himself placed in."²⁹³ He instructed Ogden to join McGillivray or remain separate "as you think best for the hunts of both."²⁹⁴ This grand design of Simpson's did not come to fruition, so Ogden was spared what could have been a troublesome decision.

Fort Nez Percés was reached on September 1. Among the "necessary arrangements" made here during the next few days was the receipt of the horses which had been assembled by Chief Trader Samuel Black. In view of the poor quality of the animals, Ogden considered the number "rather bare." As regards traps, however, he considered that he had more than enough "provided they are good."²⁹⁵

The men, appearing "tolerable well pleased" with their arrangements, were started up the Walla Walla River, evidently on

September 6, 1827, and Ogden followed on the seventh, overtaking the main party that same day. A Cayuse guide showed the company a new route across the Blue Mountains which, while longer than the two usual roads employed by the trappers, was easier on the horses. Ascending the South Fork of the Walla Walla, Ogden traversed the range and dropped down into the Grande Ronde Valley north of the present Elgin, Oregon. Here a pause was made to cut tent poles, a "necessary precaution" since suitable trees might not be seen for months.

The march was resumed on September 15. Proceeding to the south end of the valley and crossing the Grande Ronde River, Ogden turned southward at the great bend of that stream. After ascending a "steep and stony hill" he reached the upper waters of Powder River and then ascended the main stream south to the vicinity of the present Baker, Oregon. By that time essays at trapping proved that the springs on a large percentage of the traps were faulty, confirming suspicions Ogden had felt before leaving Fort Vancouver.²⁹⁶

Ogden was now back on the "beaten track" followed by earlier expeditions, so he had few hopes of gathering beaver in this region. Leaving Powder River he crossed in a southeasterly direction on a route closely paralleling today's U. S. Highway 30 to the Burnt River, which was descended nearly to its junction with the Snake. Camp was made on the latter stream on September 22, 1827.

The next day Ogden sent Thomas McKay and twelve trappers to hunt on the Owyhee River and if possible to reach the sources.

The uppermost waters had never been trapped. The lower section had been profitably hunted, but Ogden believed it might have recovered. McKay was to rejoin the main company on Little Lost River early in November. Ogden seemingly was not too optimistic as he saw McKay's party ride off toward the south. "I am almost confident they will meet with success." he wrote in his journal.²⁹⁷

With his remaining seventeen men, Ogden crossed the Snake River and started to ascend the Weiser River in the present Idaho, trapping as he went when the route was close to the stream. He got about as far as the present Midvale when his hunters reported seeing signs of other trappers at work "all along the river." Only too soon Ogden learned that six Americans were in the vicinity, a detached party from a group of forty, most of whom were "dispersed in this quarter." Six others of this party had been sent to the Owyhee River, and another six had gone with some Nez Percés to trade "on the Columbia." Ogden could see disaster facing him. "My hopes of returns in beaver . . . are now blasted," he confided to his journal, "and I am certainly at a loss how to act."²⁹⁸ His despair grew deeper the next day when he heard that the Americans, who had caught few beaver since they left Bear River in July, now proposed to follow the Snake Brigade back to the Columbia.

In this situation, Ogden determined on September 27 to send Antoine Sylvaillie and five men to the Payette river farther to the east. If no beaver were found there, Sylvaillie was to return to

Burnt River and then move to "Day's River" -- almost certainly the John Day River -- "and either this winter return to Fort Nez Percy or take their chance of finding me."²⁹⁹ Sylvaille set out on his desperate journey the next day.

Ogden and his dangerously reduced force of eleven followed up the Little Weiser, dogged by the Americans. Few beaver were found, so Ogden turned south to Crane Creek, a tributary of the Weiser. Since hunting there produced no significant results, the journey continued southward to Squaw Creek in the Payette River drainage. The company followed down this stream and reached its junction with the main Payette on October 5. Hunting had been so unproductive that the men were near starvation until Ogden managed to trade a "broken legged horse" from some Snake Indians.

It was soon apparent that there was no point to ascending the Payette. Sylvaille's tracks were found leading in that direction, and Ogden learned that a party of Americans had "almost resided on these rivers for the last eighteen months." So he went downstream to about the site of today's Emmett, forded the Payette, and headed for Boise River. When he reached the latter stream on October 7, the suspected paucity of beaver proved only too true. To make matters worse, Indians got away with a number of horses belonging to the men.

Ogden now proceeded up the Boise a short distance but still found no beaver to speak of. In fact during his entire trip from Walla Walla he had collected only 140 beaver. "This is far from

3,000," he noted ruefully, as he determined to seek his returns "in another quarter." Leaving the Boise where it debouches from the Boise Mountains, he moved on eastward by way of Camas Creek to Big Wood River. While making this traverse, Ogden was joined on October 17 by Sylvaille and party. Instead of following instructions to go westward to the Burnt and John Day Rivers, they had given up after trapping on the lower Weiser and Payette Rivers and followed in the track of the main company, pleading that the condition of their horses did not permit any other course. Ogden's disappointment was only slightly allayed by the fact that their catch averaged twenty pelts per man.

The British leader was further annoyed when he encountered five American freemen camped on Camas Creek. They were a part of the group he had met on the Weiser. The only satisfaction Ogden found in this situation was the fact that the Americans had gathered few skins. "Indeed," he wrote, "the once famed Snake Country for beaver is a ruined one now."³⁰⁰

The Big Wood was reached on October 21. Here a band of Blackfeet began to hover about the camp waiting an opportunity to run off the horses. The animals had to be tied at night and did not get enough food to regain their strength after days of hard travel. But Ogden had one satisfaction here. The Americans who had accompanied him from Camas Creek needed supplies, and he drove a hard bargain, obtaining thirty-two beaver pelts and twenty-five muskrat skins. What was more, Thiery Goddin, one of the men who

had deserted from his party in 1825, turned in thirty-five large beaver in payment of his debt to the Company. These events were further evidence that the British were more than holding their own with the numerous American hunters who had swarmed over much of the Snake Country. after Jedediah Smith led the way in 1824.

Trapping also began to produce better results along the Big Wood, and Ogden sent five men to work their way downstream.³⁰¹ His party once more reduced to twelve, Ogden turned north up the river, keeping rather closely with the Americans for safety through a region where hostile Indians were seen on every hand. When the site of today's Ketchum was reached, the company turned eastward up Trail Creek and after making a steep ascent "in many parts most dangerous for both man and beast" crossed the divide to Big Lost River.

It was now the first of November, and the weather had turned cold and stormy. Since not much trapping could be done under such conditions, Ogden decided to move slowly to "make" his provisions from buffalo and let his horses feed. But perhaps even more, his objective was "to amuse the American party" still with him so as to induce them to remain in his company and thus give McKay's detached hunters a chance to clean out the beaver in the region south of the Snake where the Americans intended to go. If he could not induce his rivals to remain, he planned to accompany them to Raft River in the hope of "obtaining a share" of any beaver found there. Ogden had learned a lot about competing with Americans since his

disastrous encounters of 1825.

Buffalo were found along Big Lost River, and ten were killed on November 3. All hands ate to their hearts' content. Ogden found it a "strange thing" to see these "Snake men who have for the last two years suffered such severe privations" feasting, for even at Fort Vancouver the regales -- the allowance of liquor and rations issued upon arrival at and departure from the base post -- were so "trifling" as to be "scarcely worth accepting." and there was no beef or pork available at the depot for the men to buy.³⁰²

From Big Lost River Ogden crossed northeastward through a pass in the Lost River Range to the upper waters of the Pahsimeroi River, a "fork" of Salmon River. From there it was easy going in an easterly direction to "Days River," the present Little Lost River. This was the place appointed for McKay to rejoin the main group, but McLoughlin's stepson and his companions were nowhere to be seen. Ogden could not wait for the missing men, since a large band of Snake Indians with many horses had swept the vicinity clean of all game and grass. He had to move on the Snake River.

Ogden was still on Little Lost River when a storm of rain on the night of November 12 caused such darkness that the guards could not see the horses "within three paces." In the morning six animals were missing and presumed stolen. Four of the horses belonged to an Indian with a large family who had accompanied the expedition from Fort Nez Percés. The man and his brood were now entirely without transportation and spent all the night "crying and lamenting their

loss." Fortunately, the horses had only strayed and were eventually found.

After descending Little Lost River nearly to its sink, Ogden started out across the Great Snake Plain southward past Big Southern Butte and reached the Snake River a few miles below the site of the later Fort Hall on November 22, 1827. Here the British overtook the large Snake camp whose track they had seen earlier. Ogden considered it good policy to make a considerable gift of powder and other trade goods to The Horse, one of the principal Snake chiefs. This man carried a United States flag -- a sure sign of contacts with American trappers -- but he had proved friendly to the British during earlier expeditions.

The brigade crossed to the south bank of the Snake several days later and made a new camp on Spring Creek, a branch of Portneuf River, a short distance west of present-day Pocatello. Despite all of Ogden's guile, the American trappers who had been with him since October 18 now decided to leave for the vicinity of Great Salt Lake. To make matters worse, eight Nez Percés who had been with the Snakes accompanied the Americans. Their purpose was to ask the traders at the American base to return the next year to barter with the Nez Percé tribe for horses. Ogden had little doubt that his rivals would be back during the coming season to carry on their activities very close to the Company's Columbia River heartland. The only comfort he could take in the departure of his American companions was the knowledge that he had traded more than one hundred beaver pelts from them, leaving them with "miserable" returns.

Winter cold came in earnest by early December. Snow and ice greatly hampered trapping, and Ogden felt compassion for his men who returned to camp from their hunts "covered with ice and nearly froze."³⁰³ Even in their leather lodges the men suffered, because the blankets available at the Fort Vancouver depot during the previous summer were not only few in number but constituted a "wretched assortment."³⁰⁴ Even food was sometimes difficult to obtain, since the starving Snake Indians, "ravenous as the wolves," pounced on buffalo as soon as Ogden's hunters brought them down.

The brigade now settled into its winter quarters, though between early December, 1827, and late April, 1828, camp was moved at intervals as game, grass, and firewood were exhausted at the various locations. But the range of territory covered was not extensive. All the camps were within a narrow belt along the east (or south) bank of Snake River from about the mouth of the Bannock River on the south to the vicinity of "Black Foot Hill," the present Ferry Butte, on the north -- a distance of about twenty-five miles.

As December wore on game became more plentiful as the unusually cold weather drove buffalo and deer to seek shelter in the willow thickets along Snake River; but deep snows made it almost impossible for the weakened horses to dig for grass, and a number had to be "left to the mercy of the natives."

The monotony of the enforced idleness was broken on December 20 when two Americans arrived from Little Lost River. They had left

the long-missing McKay there and believed he was headed for Salmon River. This news considerably relieved Ogden's mind, for he had feared that some mishap had overtaken this detachment. He derived further satisfaction from hearing that one member of the American party had joined McKay despite the fact that McLoughlin's stepson had "held out no encouragement for him to leave his employers."³⁰⁵ The next day Ogden sent off "an Indian with one of the Company's servants with two prime mules" to find McKay and, if possible, to bring him back to the main party. The engagé did not return and, despite several attempts to find him, his fate was never learned.³⁰⁶

On December 24 the small party to which the two Americans had been attached reached Ogden's camp. Their leader, Samuel Tulloch, proved "a decent kind of fellow" who told Ogden that the leaders of the American fur trade did not approve of the tactics Johnson Gardener had employed in 1825 to induce Ogden's men to desert and to try to scare the British from the Snake Country.³⁰⁷ Ogden was further cheered three days later when the men he had sent down Big Wood River reached camp after a most successful hunt. Their packs were in good order, and each trapper brought in an average of one hundred pelts.

While deep snow held Ogden tent-bound he had plenty of time to mull over the problems of the Snake Expedition and to formulate remedies. He entered his thoughts from time to time in his journal, knowing full well they would come to the attention of his superiors. He was not one to pull his punches when aroused by what he considered injustices.

He did not content himself with complaining bitterly about the quality of such necessities as the traps, blankets, and horses available at Company posts for purchase by the freemen or for use of the brigade. He also felt that the ~~trappers~~, the freemen in particular, were still treated unfairly even after McLoughlin's reforms. Frankly admitting that he had been wrong in believing "with others" that a trapper and his family could be completely outfitted for a year in the Snake Country with the £15's worth of goods he was allowed to buy at engagés' prices, Ogden now believed that supplies to the amount of £25 would be required, "and on his return to the Depot even with the above advances he will reach that place naked." He continued defiantly: "If others who reside at a distance are of a contrary opinion, let them make a winter trip to the Snake Country, and be convinced for there is nothing like being on the spot in the present times and everyone judging for himself."³⁰⁸

He was not entirely convinced that McLoughlin's reforms were sufficient to prevent desertions despite his already ample experience to the contrary. He pointed out that whereas the Company paid the equivalent of two dollars for a large beaver skin and one dollar for a cub pelt, the American traders paid an average of five dollars a skin, large or small. This difference appeared large in the eyes of the hunters despite the fact that the British sold goods on "moderate" terms while the Americans charged at least 150 per cent more. Ogden also pointed out that a trapper could obtain his outfit

from the Americans in the Snake Country and thus did not have to carry provisions to get him from the depot to the beaver grounds and accordingly could get by with fewer horses. He even had the temerity to direct attention to the contrast between himself with his rather modest remuneration of a single share of that portion of the Company's profits set aside annually for officers, and the young American fur-trade entrepreneurs, Smith, Jackson, and Sublette, who were rumored to have cleared \$20,000 from their first year's operations.³⁰⁹ Even one of the trappers who deserted him in 1825, he heard, had been able to leave the mountains "an independent man," but in the Company's service it was doubtful that a hunter, even with the strictest economy, could accumulate a similar competence even in ten years.³¹⁰

Indians were a constant nuisance, stealing horses, traps, food, and loose articles about the camp. Ogden lived in constant fear that they would kill his hunters or messengers as they ranged over the region alone or in very small groups. Many times on past expeditions had he wished all Indians -- particularly the Snakes -- exterminated, but when the Americans who were camped nearby asked him to join them in waging war against the Indians when spring arrived, Ogden expressed his personal interest but "not knowing the opinion of the Concern" refused to commit himself. If it were left to him alone, he wrote, he would not hesitate to spend a year or two in wiping out "the whole Snake tribe, women and children excepted." He was well aware, however, that "those who live at a

distance" -- particularly the London directors -- were "of a different opinion." He added: "The only reply I should make to them is, gentlemen, come, endure and suffer as we have done and judge for yourselves if forbearance and submission has not been carried too far."³¹¹

By mid January, 1828, the fury of the winter -- more severe than even the oldest Indians could remember -- was taking a dangerous toll on the horses. "Now almost daily one or two are found dead, and affords food for the wolves and crows, who now muster strong around us," Ogden wrote on January 12.³¹² Game continued to be abundant and was more easily taken after the women in camp equipped the hunters with snowshoes. No one went hungry, but boredom was a demoralizing factor. Much to Ogden's disgust -- and amazement, since playing cards were not sold to "servants" at Fort Vancouver -- the men gambled from early morning until late night. His attitude seems to have changed somewhat, however, when he found that his companions had won fourteen skins from the Americans. "Situated as we now are," he said, "we require all."³¹³

Ogden played a more serious game. Tulloch and his American trappers were still with him and were eager to open a communication with their companions near Great Salt Lake. Several attempts to send messengers through the snow failed. "The Americans are now more anxious to procure snow shoes," Ogden noted on January 16, "and I am equally so they should not." The British leader feared that if the Americans got through they would return with traps and trade

goods -- particularly liquor -- and ruin his spring hunt upon which all his hopes for success now rested. He issued orders that no snowshoes were to be made for the Americans, and his men, who also had a strong economic interest in making a good hunt, obeyed, even though offered as much as fifty dollars for a pair.³¹⁴ But when the Americans went to the Indian camp to hire a native to carry letters, Ogden had to capitulate. "It is impossible for me to bribe so many Indians," he concluded.³¹⁵ Fortunately for relations between the two groups, the Americans did not suspect that Ogden was behind their failure to obtain snowshoes. The British bourgeois considered it his duty to keep his rivals supplied with meat, since they could not hunt without snowshoes, but he believed the "interest of the Concern" entirely justified him in putting every possible impediment in the way of their trading.³¹⁶

Finally, on January 25, Ogden reported that the Americans were making their own snowshoes. All he could do was console himself with the thought that they probably could not return with a pack train of supplies before April. Three days later two of his rivals started for Great Salt Lake. Ogden noted with some satisfaction that their snowshoes were "certainly makeshifts" and that the men almost expected to fail. Before they left Ogden traded two beaver pelts from them, and he sent some of his men along with them to the nearby Indian camp to barter for any stray skins that might be there. He was taking no chances that the Americans might snatch a beaver or two away from him. When the American messengers returned to camp

in defeat on February 4, Ogden found the event "most agreeable." But at the same time this failure, together with those of several employees he had sent to find McKay on Salmon River, caused him to reflect that "in days of yore, such men as these would have been dismissed from the service, and here we are glad to have them."³¹⁷

The monotony of life in the winter camp was interrupted briefly on February 17, 1828, when a small party of Americans arrived from Bear River. It was headed by Robert Campbell, a Missouri trader, who was on his way to the Flathead country to collect furs he had traded there during the previous summer. Campbell informed Ogden that two of the American trappers who had accompanied the British expedition since September were heavily indebted to his company. "To this I made reply," Ogden noted in his journal, "that I had no knowledge of the same, and as he was now here it was his duty to secure his debts and his men also." Ogden pointed out that he had given the two trappers no encouragement to join him. "I took the liberty also of observing," he added, "that my conduct towards their party was far different from what I had received [from Americans] four years since."

Campbell acknowledge the truth of this remark and said that if the Americans had then been united in "a regular Company" the treatment Ogden had received from Johnson Gardner would have been far different. But the British leader was still wary. "This may be so," he wrote, "at all events -- situated as they are dependent on me -- it is not their interest to say to the contrary. I have

acted so far, honourable towards them, and shall continue so, and probably situated as we are, it is the best policy we can adopt."³¹⁸ Obviously, Ogden enjoyed the superior position -- both morally and economically -- in which he found himself.

On March 1, 1828, three men who had been sent in search of McKay's detached party returned to report they had found McLoughlin's stepson in "snug winter quarters" at the junction of the Salmon and Lemhi Rivers, near the present Salmon, Idaho. This was welcome news for Ogden, since he was anxious to reunite his expedition so that he would be strong enough to press a spring hunt up the Snake River in the face of the Blackfeet.

Two of McKay's men had accompanied the messengers back to Ogden's camp. One of them, a young Canadian who had deserted from the Americans the previous fall and joined McKay, made sure he was clear of any debts owed to Tulloch and then, said Ogden, "entered into an arrangement with me, on the same footing as our freemen." How sweet this turn of events must have been for Ogden!

All through March the snow lay deep on the ground, but as the weather began to moderate a bit and stretches of open water to appear on the rivers Ogden sent his trappers out in several directions. "It is truly a novel sight to trap on snow shoes," he remarked. His hunters employed a sled to bring in the game they brought down, another unusual means of transportation in a region where during most winters, he said, the snow depth seldom exceeded two inches. Four canoes were built to enable the men to set their

traps along the several channels of Snake River. Without them, Ogden believed, the returns would have been reduced by two-thirds. While the yield from the traps was not great, it was fairly steady, and these furs, together with the few he was able to trade from the Indians and Americans, gave him a slight hope that his expedition might not be a complete failure.

On March 26 Tulloch and his party of Americans who had been with Ogden since December started for Great Salt Lake. Although relations between the two groups had been amicable, Ogden was heartily glad to see his rivals go. "They caused more trouble than profit," in his opinion.³¹⁹ Ogden did not learn until more than a month later that shortly after leaving his camp these men had been attacked by the Blackfeet with the loss of at least three men, about \$4000 in furs, forty-four horses, and a quantity of trade goods. Ogden was entirely innocent in this matter, but William Ashley afterwards accused him of profiting from it by knowingly purchasing the pillaged furs from the murderers. Far from doing so, Ogden recorded that news of the tragedy received from the Snake Indians "caused a general gloom over the camp," and he made no effort to trade with the natives who said they were on their way to Great Salt Lake to restore some of the property and horses to their rightful owners.³²⁰

At that time the American trappers in general were -- or pretended to be -- suspicious of the Hudson's Bay Company's motives and actions in the Snake Country. They experienced a series of

costly clashes with the Indians -- mostly Blackfeet -- but noticed that the British brigades roamed about freely with relatively minor harassment. If they knew of the salutary lesson administered by McDonald in 1823 they preferred to forget it. It made better political propaganda to accuse the Company of supplying the Indians with arms and ammunition for hostile purposes, of trading for plundered furs, and of "making violent exertions to monopolize the fur trade West of the Rocky Mountains."³²¹ The last part of this accusation was true enough, but the Company's expeditions were under orders from the Governor and Committee to avoid any aggressive or violent actions towards the Americans that might serve to give the United States Government cause for complaint.³²² The Company proposed to gain supremacy solely through vigorous competition in the trade, by underselling its opponents whenever and wherever opportunity offered. It was well aware that it had the resources to wage such a struggle, while most of the Americans, generally under-financed, could not afford to operate for long at a loss.

On March 27, 1828, Ogden received a letter from McKay indicating that he was still snowbound on Salmon River. Ogden realized that this detached party could not join him in time to make a projected spring hunt on Henrys Fork, and he knew his own party was too weak "to face the war tribes" in that region. Thus plans to ascend the Snake River for any considerable distance were abandoned. Instead, on April 8 he sent a party of six men under Antoine Sylvaile, "the most trustworthy man I have at present at my disposal," to hunt on

the tributaries of Big Wood River and then to return to Fort Nez Percés by the end of July.

During the last few days of April Ogden moved his camp northeast along Snake River to a site at the mouth of Blackfoot River and near the present Ferry Butte.. Signs of Blackfoot horsethieves were noted, and a careful guard was kept over the precious remaining horses. Ogden's anxiety to have McKay join him became acute. To his great satisfaction, McLoughlin's stepson and his party appeared on May 8, bringing more than 440 beaver.

Thus reenforced, Ogden was emboldened to ascend the Snake. The party advanced to a point about thirteen miles north of the present Idaho Falls. Trapping on the way was much more productive than expected, but rapidly rising water in the river put an end to the prosperity. Since melting snows could be expected to keep the river high for a month or more, there was nothing else to do but turn about and start for Fort Nez Percés.

The expedition was back on the Blackfoot River on May 22. The next day one of the men attempted to swim the stream with his horse and traps but "lost all" and was nearly drowned himself. "A most serious loss," commented Ogden, "to both the trapper and the concern, as he must now in a manner remain idle."³²³

The Blackfeet had been seen in numbers for several days, and on May 24 tragedy struck. One of the freemen, Louis LaValle, was killed by the Indians less than half a mile from camp. Ogden estimated that there were about sixty Indians in the band that murdered

LaValle and stripped him naked. Fortunately, four other trappers in the vicinity saw the raiders and managed to hide themselves. The body was brought back to camp and buried. LaValle left behind a wife and three children, "in a manner destitute." Ogden was outraged. "It is certainly most galling to the feelings of all, who are doomed to seek their bread in this country," he wrote, "that these villains commit so many murders without it being in our power to retaliate in kind."³²⁴ Three days later another man was chased by the Blackfeet but managed to get back to camp safely.

The course was now westward along the south bank of the Snake River. The pace was rather leisurely due to bad weather and the necessity of hunting buffalo and "making provisions" to carry the party over the barren stretches on the homeward journey. At Raft River a short detour was made up that stream to trap beaver and to kill buffalo. Lurking Blackfeet fired five shots at one of the hunters, but he escaped without injury. Enough bison were brought down to bring the total supply of meat to an average of one bale per man. Ogden hoped this would suffice to get the men back to Walla Walla. "There being no fat," he remarked with some satisfaction, "will oblige them to eat less."³²⁵ His calculations threatened to go awry, however, when rain forced him to lay by for a day. "The loss of this day does not increase our stock of provisions," he commented, "for when Canadians are idle they consume double the quantity than when employed."³²⁶

Near the Owyhee River on July 7 Ogden learned from the Snakes that Sylvaille's advance party had been attacked on May 20 by 150

Blackfeet. One woman had been killed and all the horses stolen. The survivors cached their returns -- 650 beaver -- on Big Wood River and made their way on foot to the Owyhee, nearly starving during the journey. "They were fortunate in escaping with their lives," was Ogden's understated comment.³²⁷ Two days later the main party overtook Sylvaille and three of his men on Malheur River.

On July 11 Ogden sent that premier frontiersman and scourge of all hostile Indians, Tom McKay, and eleven men back to Big Wood River to recover the hidden furs. No account of his trip is known, but McKay was successful and brought the skins to Fort Vancouver.³²⁸

The main party continued its way down the Snake and reached Burnt River on July 14. From this point the journey was over the usual trail by way of Powder River and over the Blue Mountains to Fort Nez Percés. Ogden arrived there on July 19, 1828, and the rest of his men followed on the twenty-second. "So ends my fourth trip to the Snake Country," he wrote in concluding his journal, "and I have to report the loss of lives [two men and a woman], which to me is at all times most distressing to my feelings, but such things will happen independent of all precautions to prevent it. In other respects . . . the returns far exceed my expectations."³²⁹

Ogden and eighteen of his men brought their furs down to Fort Vancouver by boat, arriving there on July 31, 1828. McKay reached the depot on August 5 with the cached skins from Big Wood River. All told, the returns amounted to 3093 beaver, large and small; 19 "coating" beaver [skins which had been worn by the Indians as

clothing]; and 59 land otter. They were valued at £4002.5.11.³³⁰ Governor Simpson later estimated the profit of Ogden's fourth expedition at £2500.³³¹

Chief Factor McLoughlin was highly gratified by the results. "Mr. Ogdens returns are better than last year," he informed the London directors on August 7, 1828. "When it is considered Mr. Ogden was in a part of the Country over run by American Trappers, his returns are a proof of his exertions & those of his Party with whose conduct he is highly pleased." He also regretted the cost in lives at which these results had been achieved.³³²

But the Columbia manager had no intention of letting this valuable conductor of parties enjoy a hard-earned rest. "As soon as the people return from putting the Furs on board the Vessel (which I detained a few days for them)," McLoughlin added, "he will start on his return to his hunting grounds." Three days earlier he had instructed Samuel Black at Fort Nez Percés to obtain seventy "good horses" for Ogden's use.³³³

As it turned out, the delay seems to have been slightly longer than the good doctor anticipated. The very next night, August 8, 1828, he, Ogden, and the other inhabitants of Fort Vancouver were startled by Indians making "a great noise" before the fort gate, shouting that they had brought an American. The man proved to be Arthur Black, a member of a trapping party headed by Ogden's traveling companion and trade rival of 1824-1825, Jedediah Smith.

When the exhausted and almost naked Black could speak, "we elicited the particulars" of his story, wrote Ogden years later.³³⁴ Black unfolded a chilling tale: the Americans, on their way from California to Great Salt Lake by way of Fort Vancouver, had been treacherously attacked by Indians on the Umpqua River. He believed himself to be the only survivor. But on August 10 Smith and two other members of his party reached the depot, guided by friendly Tillamook Indians.³³⁵

McLoughlin, whose heart was as big as his massive frame, experienced "great joy" that as many as four persons had miraculously escaped the slaughter, and he offered the hospitality of the establishment. Even though the American competitors had reached the very core of the Company's operations west of the Rockies, the "Big Doctor" found no satisfaction in their defeat. "This unfortunate affair," he told the London directors, "is extremely injurious to us as the success & facility with which the Natives accomplished their object lowers Europeans in their estimation & consequently very much diminishes our security."

At that time Chief Trader Alexander Roderick McLeod was on the point of leaving for a trapping expedition south from Fort Vancouver. McLoughlin ordered him to recover as much of Smith's property as possible and to punish the murderers if he thought the results would be salutary.³³⁶ Jedediah Smith left the depot on September 6 to accompany the punitive expedition.³³⁷

Exactly how much time Ogden had to discuss matters of mutual interest with Smith is not apparent. Very probably the preparations to get McLeod off caused some postponement of Ogden's departure for Walla Walla to organize his fifth Snake Country expedition. But whether he left the depot before or after September 6 is not clear. All that seems certain from the sources thus far examined is that he was at Fort Nez Percés in time to set out for the Snake Country on September 22.³³⁸

Ogden's journal of 1824-1825 gives no indication that he developed any particularly close friendship with Smith during the several months the British and American brigades traveled in close proximity at that time. In fact, if William Kittson's comment that Smith was "a sly cunning Yankee" is any clue, the relationship between the leaders of the two companies was anything but cordial.³³⁹ Yet years later Ogden claimed to have been "intimately acquainted with poor Smith."³⁴⁰ If so, the two men seem to have gotten to know each other much better at Fort Vancouver during August, 1828.

In any event, it is clear that Smith gave Ogden and Governor Simpson an account of his adventures during at least the previous two years. Long after the conversations at Fort Vancouver Ogden was able to repeat with considerable detail, though not always with complete accuracy, Smith's account of the massacre of ten of his men by the Mojave Indians on the Colorado River in August, 1827.³⁴¹ The British trader had occasion to profit by this information two and a half years later when he encountered what he believed to be the same native band somewhere in the vicinity of the Colorado.

It is not certain that Smith also told Ogden of the more than 1500 pounds of beaver skins he had collected in the San Joaquin and lower Sacramento Valleys in the spring of 1827, but he did indicate that he found the Sacramento River "well stocked with beaver" early in 1828.³⁴² This news undoubtedly influenced the route of the Snake Brigade in 1829 and 1830, particularly since Smith had declared that ~~his~~ intention before the massacre had been to return West with a "large body of Trappers" to scour the region for beaver.³⁴³

Ogden's fifth Snake expedition began on September 22, 1828, when he rode out from Fort Nez Percés to join his party camped a short distance away at the foot of the Blue Mountains. "We are this year well provided in numbers as regards horses and traps but both so far from appearances are of an indifferent quality," he noted in his journal. Nevertheless, he was confident that if beaver were found, "we shall always find ways and means of taking and conveying them to the Columbia River."³⁴⁴ In addition to the bourgeois himself, the company seems to have consisted of twenty-nine men and boys, three Indians, and the usual women and children.³⁴⁵

The objective of the party was the still-unexplored territory lying south of the Snake River drainage, the vast portion of the Great Basin between Great Salt Lake and the Sierra Nevada. This region had never been penetrated by any trapper, British or American, ~~except for Jedediah Smith's brief transit in 1827.~~ But Ogden had received vague reports from the Indians of beaver streams in that direction, and knowledge of Smith's deep penetration into Mexican

territory seemingly had made Governor Simpson more than ever eager to exhaust the fur resources in that direction before the Americans should reach it.³⁴⁶ Ogden was instructed to return in time to ship his furs to England by the supply vessel of 1829.³⁴⁷

Traveling eastward by his track of the previous year across the Blue Mountains to the Grande Ronde River and then to Powder River, Ogden detached two groups to trap the upper waters of Burnt River and the Malheur River. With the remainder of the brigade he proceeded to the junction of the Burnt and Snake Rivers, where he sent eleven more men to hunt on some of the northern tributaries of the latter stream. This party, under François Payette, returned to the Columbia without ever rejoining the main command.³⁴⁸ Ogden was "fully aware" of the dangers of thus separating his party into four small groups, but he felt that the depleted stock of beaver near the Snake, making hunts by large brigades unprofitable, left him no alternative.³⁴⁹

With his ten remaining men, Ogden moved to the Malheur River. The party ascended this stream, trapping with only moderate success until October 21, by which time the two small parties sent to hunt in this direction had rejoined the main brigade. Continuing in a southern direction along the eastern base of Steens Mountain, the company passed Alvord Lake and reached Quinn River near the northwest corner of the present Nevada. Ogden, having heard from local Indians of a river with beaver only four days' march distant, pushed forward to the southeast, but it was November 9, 1828, before he reached a

"fine large stream apparently well lined with willows." He had struck the present Humboldt River about eight miles above today's Winnemucca, Nevada.

To Ogden's great joy, a beaver house, "apparently well stocked," at once greeted his eye. The next morning, "long before the dawn of day," every trap and trapper in camp was in motion toward the upstream hunting grounds. When the traps were checked the next day the catch was fifty beaver.³⁵⁰ To men who had already begun to eat their exhausted horses this haul meant more than mere skins -- they could once again fill their stomachs without sacrificing their precious animals.

Since Ogden, as far as is known, was the first European to see the Humboldt River -- which he later named ~~the~~ Unknown River because of this fact -- he had no idea where the stream terminated. He speculated that it might be a part of the Owyhee River. He was tempted to explore it downstream, but visiting Indians said that beaver were more numerous on the upper waters, so Ogden turned eastward along the stream that in a short time was to set the course of the main Overland Trail. A few days later natives told him that the river discharged into a lake and that no salmon ascended it. He was relieved by this news because it meant that the stream had no connection with the Pacific Ocean and that he was therefore not intruding on the trapping territory assigned to his fellow officer, Alexander Roderick McLeod.

On the night of November 24 a veteran trapper, Joseph Paul, returned to camp "dangerously ill." Ogden was worried. "This poor man stands but a poor chance of living long in this country," he noted in his journal. "A sick man is not an enviable situation in any part of the world, still less in this."³⁵¹ The march was halted to see if Paul would recover, but the patient quickly came to share Ogden's gloomy ~~prognostication~~ prognosis. He begged his companions, "as an act of charity," to end his sufferings by drowning him in the river. Ogden would have none of it. "This mode although practised by the Snake Indians and other tribes will not answer for Christians," he remarked.

After ten days, however, it became evident that the party would have to be on its way. The horses had exhausted the scanty forage available, and the men were on short rations because beaver had been nearly exterminated in the nearby waters. On December 6 the sick man believed he could move. Assisted by two companions and "well covered" by robes and blankets from the bitter cold, he mounted a horse and managed to keep with the brigade as it marched eastward by slow stages.

By December 10, when the company was very close to the site of the present Carlin, Nevada, it was clear that Paul could go no farther. He implored the company to leave, and two men volunteered to stay with him. Reluctantly, Ogden consented. In fact, there was nothing else to do. To remain might result in having to eat the entire horse herd, an event which would have meant the failure of the expedition and possible death for the men. So Ogden left

a bag of peas and a three-year-old horse in camp, and the main party continued its way up the Humboldt.

The river was by that time "entirely fast bound with ice," so the Chief Trader decided to proceed more directly toward Great Salt Lake and Bear River and to leave further hunting along the Humboldt until spring. Guided by an Indian he had picked up, he left the river a short distance above the modern Elko on December 12, 1828, and marched across the ranges and valleys of eastern Nevada and then passed around the northern end of Great Salt Lake. Turning northward, the brigade reached the northern end of Pocatello Valley, Utah, on January 1, 1829, both men and horses worn down by hard travel and lack of food.

On that day and on January 4 and 5, the two men, a woman, and two children who had remained behind with Joseph Paul limped into camp. They reported that Paul had died eight days after Ogden left him. The leader observed: "There remains now only one man living of all the Snake men of 1819 and rather extraordinary all have been killed, with the exception of two who died a natural death, and are scattered over the Snake Country. Indeed for a country so lately discovered it is almost incredible the numbers that have fallen in it."³⁵²

Buffalo encountered in this region north of Great Salt Lake eased the food shortage which once more had become acute, but Ogden discovered as he moved farther northward that the Malad River, which had been trapped by American for four years, yielded